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CITATION:

GEBRE, Yntiso. DIFFERENTIAL REESTABLISHMENT OF VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY MOGRANTS: THE CASE OF METEKEL SETTLERS IN ETHIOPIA. African Study Monographs 2002, 23(1): 31-46

ISSUE DATE:

2002-03

URL:

<https://doi.org/10.14989/68211>

RIGHT:

## DIFFERENTIAL REESTABLISHMENT OF VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY MIGRANTS: THE CASE OF METEKEL SETTLERS IN ETHIOPIA

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**ABSTRACT** Voluntary and involuntary resettlements are distinguished on the bases of the decision-making power of migrants, their willingness to leave their original residence, the presence of push/pull factors, and the age make-up of relocatees. The distinction addresses the conditions and behaviors of potential migrants prior to their relocation. However, much remained unknown about the conduct of voluntary and involuntary settlers during the critical period of reestablishment in the new environment. In 1998/99, the mid-1980s settlers in the Metekel resettlement area, Western Ethiopia, were studied with the objective to investigate, compare, and contrast their adaptation experiences. Certain indicators believed to reflect successful reestablishment were used for the comparison. Despite the fact that the resettlement authorities treated all settlers alike, most voluntary migrants appeared materially better off than most involuntary settlers. These differential readjustment experiences thus suggest that the manner of resettlement may determine the pace and degree of successful reestablishment. Policymakers and resettlement planners should, therefore, recognize that the disruptive effects of forced displacement could be deep-rooted, far-reaching, and enduring.

**Key Words:** Voluntary/involuntary; Resettlement; Differential reestablishment; Metekel; Ethiopia.

### INTRODUCTION

Displacement and resettlement studies distinguish between voluntary and forced settlers based on various factors. Art Hansen and Anthony Oliver-Smith (1982: 4) stated that involuntary migrants are distinguished from voluntary migrants by (1) a diminished power of decision and (2) the original absence on the part of the forced migrants of a desire or motivation to leave their place of residence. Michael Cernea and Scott Guggenheim (1993: 3) differentiated forced resettlements and voluntary movements on the basis of (1) push-pull factors and (2) age-based makeup of the displaced population. Other researchers recognized the occurrence of differential responses to forced migration (Scudder & Colson, 1982; Nachowitz, 1988), a phenomenon that would create the voluntary-involuntary dichotomy. Since such distinction is not always easy to make because of varying contexts and relationships generating migration behaviors, an all-inclusive definition cannot exist. In this paper, voluntary migrants are defined as people who, for some reason, willingly left their habitual environment or place of origin, and resettled in settings other than their own. Involuntary migrants are defined as people who are intimidated or forced to leave their habitual environment or place of origin.

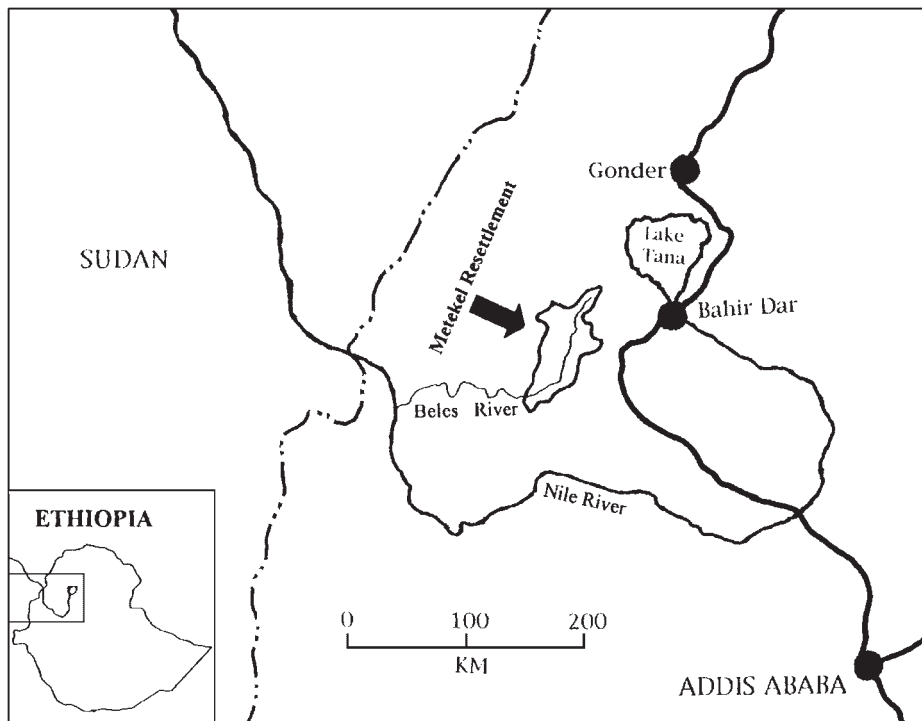
The above characterizations and definitions largely address the conditions and behaviors of migrants prior to the actual movement. However, much remained unknown about their conditions and behaviors during the critical phase of reestablishment. Between September 1998 and December 1999, I conducted research in the Metekel resettlement area, Western Ethiopia, partly with the objective to understand the readjustment experiences of the mid-1980s settlers (Data were collected employing different techniques, namely, observation, panel discussion, interview, sample survey, and household census of selected villages.). My hypothesis was, "if voluntary and involuntary settlers were involved in the same resettlement program, the voluntary settlers would have readjusted or adapted better and sooner than involuntary settlers." The adaptational experiences of the two categories of settlers in Metekel were compared and contrasted using indicators believed to reflect successful reestablishment. The indicators included cattle ownership, resilience to periodic food scarcity, self-reported satisfaction, per capita grain production, and possession of valuable goods.

Material possessions and verbally expressed emotional feelings of informants were analyzed to determine if there were marked differences between forced and voluntary settlers. The study revealed that at the time of the research, fifteen years after the establishment of the resettlement, there were differences between voluntary and involuntary migrants in terms of resource ownership and level of food security. Although the resettlement authorities treated all settlers alike in terms of resource and service provision, most voluntary migrants appeared materially better off than most involuntary relocatees. These differential readjustment experiences, therefore, suggest that the manner of resettlement could determine the pace and degree of reestablishment in the new environment. It also became apparent that the disruptive effects of forced displacement could be deep-rooted, far-reaching, and enduring.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE ETHIOPIAN RESETTLEMENT

During the mid-1980s, the Ethiopian government relocated about 600,000 people from drought-affected and over-populated regions to different resettlement sites, namely, Metekel, Metema, Assosa, Gambella, and Kefa, located in the western and southwestern parts. Of the total figure, over 82,000 people moved to Metekel area (also called Pawe or Beles area), Western Ethiopia, originally inhabited by the Gumz shifting cultivators. According to the current administrative structure, Metekel is one of the three zones of Benishangul-Gumz Regional State. Pawe, the administrative center of Metekel Zone, is located some 550 km west of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. In 1994, the total population was 201,521 (CSA, 1998). The zone consists of seven districts, namely, Bulen, Dangur, Dibate, Guba, Mandura, Wombera, and Pawe Special.

Until 1994, the resettlement area was part of the Metekel Administrative Zone. Because of conflicts between the Gumz and the settlers in the early 1990s, the resettlement area was recognized as Pawe Special District administratively answerable to Benishangul-Gumz Regional State, bypassing the Metekel Zone. Politically, the district allegedly bypassed even the regional state in that it received political directives



**Fig. 1.** Location of Metekel Resettlement Area.

from and sent reports to the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM). ANDM was a political party that primarily operated in the Amhara Region. Although some officials of Pawe Special District did not deny the existence of what they termed “cooperation” with ANDM, it was difficult to understand the nature of the relationship.

The official objective of the resettlement was to prevent famine (or attain food security) by moving people from drought-prone and overly crowded areas to sparsely populated regions and unoccupied virgin lands. As discussed below, critics believed that the program was motivated by hidden agenda: the need to suppress opposition movements and control rural people. Western countries, particularly the USA, the UK, the Federal Republic of Germany, and most other members of the EU were also opposed to this controversial resettlement program (Jansson, 1990).

The famines of the 1970s and 1980s may have been caused or at least exacerbated by a combination of factors, such as droughts, population pressures, civil wars, and misguided development strategies. Ethiopian famines have generally been associated with recurrent drought, epidemics, and pests. Indeed, it would be abrupt to conclude that drought was the sole factor. The population of Ethiopia increased from 23 million in 1965 to 65 million in 2001. This unprecedented surge in demographic factors created a mismatch between food production (which has been in decline since the 1960s) and food requirements. Although it is possible that rapid population growth may have contributed to food scarcity, the relationship between the famines

and demographic characteristics also needs to be generalized with caution.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there were civil wars and political instability in Ethiopia. In the war zones, agricultural production and marketing activities were severely affected. The costs of civil wars were high in terms of human loss, financial expenditure, and the impact on the agricultural labor force. Between the late 1950s and the early 1990s, Ethiopia experienced misguided development strategies as well. Emperor Haile-Selassie's government followed policies that failed to address the problems of smallholder production, a sector that provided employment for about 85% of the population. President Mengistu's policies of collectivization, villagization, resettlement, and market control discouraged agricultural production and productivity.

In the mid-1980s, the Ethiopian government portrayed the resettlement program as a lasting solution to the famine problem. Given the slow reaction of the international community in terms of providing food aid due to ideological reasons, resettlement was seen as a way out of a frustrating problem and humiliating dependency on food aid. Critics not only questioned the sincerity of the government position, but also indicated alleged hidden motives behind the resettlement program. The government was suspected of suppressing insurgent movements by depopulating their mass base, diluting their ethnic homogeneity (Clay & Holcomb, 1986: 29; Keller, 1993: 233), and using resettlement areas as buffer zones (de Waal, 1991: 221).

As indicated earlier, most of the settlers came from northern Ethiopia and resettled in the southwestern and western parts of the country. Some writers explained this movement as a pattern of state-sponsored population migration that began a century ago (Scott, 1998: 248; Clay & Holcomb, 1986: 28). The objective of the resettlement might also be associated with collectivization and the socialist transformation of agriculture, a development program that the government vigorously tried to promote in the country. No concrete documents were found to substantiate these allegations. However, when viewed in a broader context and in light of the maneuvering tactics of the government, these allegations did not seem to be baseless speculations. The government may have maintained such hidden agendas as added advantages of the resettlement.

The resettlement initiative can be regarded as forced because in October 1984 the government announced its decision to execute an emergency resettlement plan without the consent of potential settlers. There was clear determination on the part of authorities to relocate people, if necessary by force. According to written accounts (Pankhurst, 1990; Jansson, 1990) and first-hand information from the field, some people, particularly those recruited in late 1984 and early 1985 welcomed the initiative and volunteered to be resettled. Those enlisted after mid-1985, however, resisted the resettlement initiative and were dislocated against their will. From this it is obvious that people responded differently to the same relocation initiative, and hence the program involved voluntary and involuntary settlers.

The highland settlers were moved to the unfamiliar Metekel lowland and resettled in 48 villages on both sides of the Beles River. Before their arrival, authorities portrayed the new site as safe havens with great prospects for agricultural development. Settlers were given deceitful assurances about housing facilities, agricultural tools, schools, health services, water, and transportation. Some settlers from distant loca-

tions, such as Wollo, North Shoa, South Shoa, Tigray, and Gonder had no opportunity to carry their properties to Metekel, while others stated that they had no valuables. Therefore, most of the Metekel settlers, with the exception of some households from the neighboring Gojam area, did not bring dependable resources to the resettlement area.

Upon arrival, they witnessed a completely different reality than they had expected. Most settlers found the physical environment to be harsh (hot and humid), malaria ridden, and unsuitable for the types of crops (e.g., tef, wheat, barley, and peas) they used to grow in their places of origin. Only finger millet, sorghum, and sesame grow well in Metekel lowlands. There were no decent houses, schools, clinics, clean water, and transportation facilities. The guests soon realized that they were surrounded by hostile hosts (the Gumz people), who were opposed to the resettlement program for losing control over the resources of their livelihood. The shortage of food and clean water, congestion, a lack of sanitation, and clashes with the Gumz increased mortality.

In late March 1986, Italian agencies initiated emergency relief programs and large-scale agro-industrial development projects in the Metekel resettlement area. The emergency operation began by providing villagers with food, clothing, blankets, household utensils, and medical assistance. The specific development-oriented projects sponsored by a major Italian cooperation program (known as the "Tana-Beles Project") focused on two sectors: production (mechanized agriculture, forestation, fishery, agroindustry, and a pipe factory) and general infrastructure (water supplies, roads, bridges, housing, stores, airport, health, education, and others). The new development reportedly improved the conditions of food supply, drinking water, and health provisions. However, the settlers were forced to form cooperatives and work on communal land as daily laborers for biweekly food rations. They had no control over production decisions, productive resources, and product of their labor. Prior to 1993, the settlers had no private farmland other than the 0.1 or 0.2 hectares of garden fields.

The generous assistance of the Italian government to the Tana-Beles Project suddenly terminated in the early 1990s due to a government change in Ethiopia. This forced assetless settlers to return to plough agriculture. The post-1991 adaptation represented a critical period during which the difference between voluntary and forced settlers became apparent. In 1993, the project, by then taken over and managed by Ethiopian authorities, distributed 0.75 hectares of farmland and 0.1-0.2 hectares of garden to each resettled household. The soils of Metekel resettlement area can be classified as black vertisols, red nitosols, and brown soils. Households with dominantly red and/or brown soils obtained higher agricultural production than those households with black soils. However, the adaptation differences between the voluntary and involuntary settlers cannot be explained in terms of differences in soil quality because the land allocation scheme was not biased against any settler category. From the beginning, the resettlement authorities and the foreign assistance programs treated all settlers alike. Therefore, the different adaptations discussed below cannot be explained in relation to differential treatment of migrants in the resettlement area.

## INDICATORS OF READJUSTMENT DIFFERENCES

In 1998, the population of the Metekel resettlement area was estimated at 29,236 (unpublished record, Tana Beles Project). The number of settlers decreased as most of them had left Metekel after 1991. In this section, the adaptation experiences of forced and voluntary migrants living in resettlement area at the time of the study are compared using the five indicators mentioned earlier. The comparison was conducted at general and specific levels. At the general level, data from the sample survey and household census were used to compare the conditions of voluntary and involuntary settlers, regardless of settlers' differences in geographic and cultural backgrounds. The Metekel settlers came from different geographic and ethnic origins. The specific comparison refers to a thorough examination of material betterment and emotional satisfaction of 20 key informants (10 voluntary settlers and 10 forced migrants) from the Wollo area. The 20 key informants (13 men and 7 women) were selected from one geographic region to ensure that the settlers' backgrounds did not cause the variation in readjustment. The differentiating features reflected in the analysis of the 20 cases were checked against data from the larger samples to assess possible transparencies and consistencies. The interviews were also used to present details that could not be captured by the survey questionnaires.

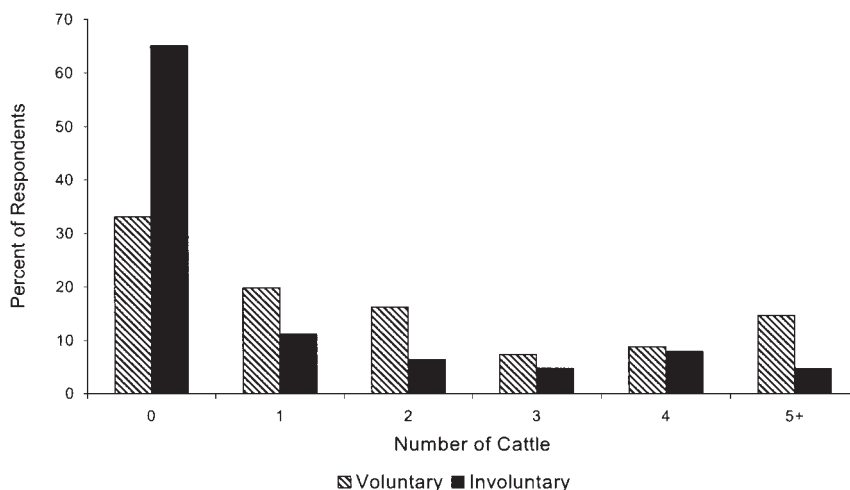
Concrete and reliable data are lacking regarding the socio-economic condition of individual households prior to their relocation. In the absence of such records, the fact that the settlers came from the same geographic background does not mean that they had the same socio-economic status. Actually, information gathered from Metekel suggests that, prior to their resettlement, most involuntary settlers were better off than most voluntary settlers. However, differences that existed amongst the migrants before their migration evened out during the initial phase of the resettlement. First, the relocates (who traveled 2-3 days by bus) could not carry their belongings with them. Second, many voluntary settlers stated that they had left their homes after exhausting their resources. Third, many involuntary settlers complained that they were forcibly rounded up and hastily moved to Metekel, leaving their resources behind. Fourth, due to the famine and massive scale of relocation, the demand for animals and goods decreased. Some abandoned their property, some left them with relatives, while others managed to sell them. Fifth, from the date of their arrival in Metekel until March 1986, the settlers experienced severe famine, and that was when the last savings were used up and differences amongst them evened out.

### I. Cattle Ownership

Among sedentary agriculturalists, animals represented one of the most important productive resources as well as income sources. They were used as an expression of wealth and social status. Animals were also kept as savings and insurance assets to be used in the event of unexpected adversities. In this regard, the Metekel settlers were no exception. The readjustment experience of voluntary and forced migrants could be compared, at least partly, by counting the number of animals they raised or tried to raise during their stay in the resettlement area.

Figure 2, which is based on data from a sample population of 368 households,





**Fig. 2.** Percentage Comparison of Cattle Ownership in Metekel Resettlement, 1999.

shows that 65% of the involuntary settlers did not have cattle in 1999. On the other hand, only 33% of the voluntary settlers reported that they did not have cattle. In other words, 67% of the voluntary settlers had at least a cow or an ox. Among those who owned one or more head of cattle, the percentage for voluntary settlers was generally higher than the percentage for involuntary settlers.

This comparison is consistent with the data obtained from 20 key informants. In 1999, nine of the ten voluntary informants had draft animals. They owned a total of 22 head of cattle. They also reported that, before 1999, they had had a total of 46 oxen/cows, many of which were lost due to cattle diseases. All informants indicated that they used to raise small ruminants (goats/sheep) as well. During the research period, however, only one informant owned a couple of goats. It appeared that most settlers started livestock production with such small animals with an ultimate objective of converting them into cattle. Once they acquired cattle, settlers tended to save money for veterinary services rather than investing in more small ruminants that were also susceptible to disease.

Some of the voluntary settlers started raising animals as early as 1986 and 1987. One informant indicated that he was the first to buy goats and later on cattle in his village in 1986. Initially, local officials and cadres disapproved of his effort to initiate private accumulation in a setting designed to promote the spirit of collective production. Later on, however, interested settlers were encouraged to participate in private livestock production. Prior to 1991, oxen/cows were rarely used for traction purposes because the resettlement area depended on highly mechanized agriculture. Animals were kept as savings, insurance assets, and a sign of wealth. By the time the tractor services terminated in the mid 1990s, half of the voluntary settlers interviewed had draft animals. Therefore, the process of returning to plough agriculture was relatively smoother for such settlers than for those without animals.

Of the ten informants selected from involuntary settlers, six owned a total of 12 head of cattle in 1999. Many started buying draft animals after the mid 1990s, a crit-



ical period that marked the termination of tractor services. This period also represented a time during which many settlers had to decide whether or not to stay in Metekel. One of the key informants returned to his homeland with the hope of regaining the land he had left behind in the 1980s. Unfortunately, local officials were unwilling to entertain his claim over land that had long been reallocated to other residents. His brothers and sisters received him cold-heartedly. Therefore, he returned to Metekel and bought an ox to pursue farming. Another informant had only one milking cow for years. In 1998, he visited Wollo and witnessed increased land scarcity, a prolonged dry spell, and unwillingness of his relatives and local officials to support him. He returned to Metekel and bought two oxen. Three young informants reported that they bought draft animals, for the first time, between 1996 and 1999.

The fact that only four of the ten involuntary settlers owned oxen prior to the mid 1990s, and that among them they owned only four oxen, suggested that the participation of involuntary settlers in livestock production was limited. Most of the informants selected from forced migrants did not have savings or investment in the form of cattle to deal with unanticipated adversities, such as the unexpected termination of tractor services. In 1999, many of them were raising small ruminants with an ultimate objective of converting them to draft animals. This is a common strategy employed by low-income farmers.

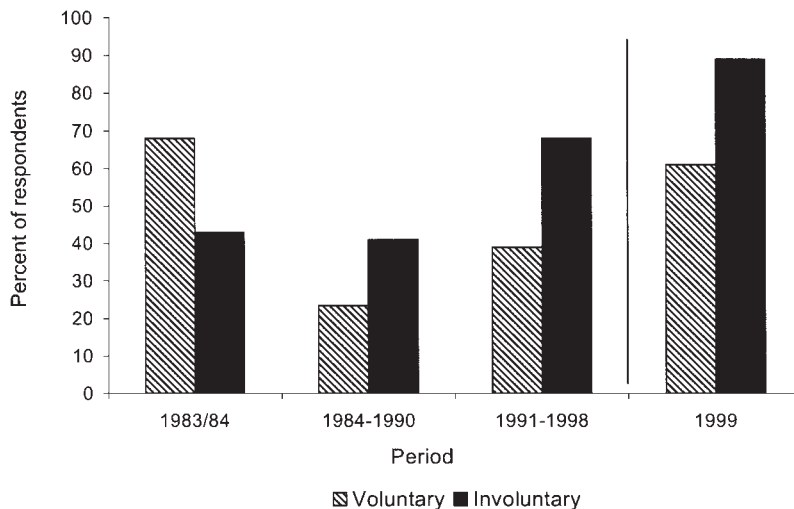
The household census also supported the observation that proportionally more voluntary settlers had cattle. The census, designed to collect mainly demographic and economic data, was conducted in four resettled villages. According to the census result from one of the villages, 58% of the voluntary settlers owned cattle, and the average holding was 3.5. In the same village, only 49% of the involuntary settlers owned cattle and the average holding was about two. It is important to note that the relative disparity in the ownership of draft animals translated into relative differentiation in crop production and overall economic standing. Those with draft animals tended to have large or multiple granaries filled with many quintals of cereals. On the other hand, most of the settlers without draft animals had smaller granaries with few quintals of grain.

## II. Resilience to Periodic Food Scarcity

In the context of resettlement, generally speaking, well-reestablished households might be expected to endure food insecurity. The present section examines whether the voluntary settlers were more food secure/insecure than their involuntary counterparts. With this in mind, respondents and informants were asked whether they ever had experienced severe food shortages, at least once, (1) in their homeland in 1983/4, (2) between 1984 and 1990, and (3) between 1991 and 1998. They were also asked whether their 1999 harvest would last until the 2000 harvest. Of the 368 randomly selected sample population, 136 were voluntary settlers and 63 were involuntary settlers. The remaining 169 consisted of people who came as dependents (e.g., children and siblings) of settlers and those who arrived after 1991.

The sub-category defined as "dependents of settlers" (children, siblings, etc. who accompanied or followed adult settlers) established their independent households

after arriving in Metekel. Although these people identify themselves as voluntary or forced settlers, they are treated as belonging to a different category only for the purpose of this paper. From 1991 to 1999, thousands of households voluntarily migrated to the Metekel area from the neighboring highlands. The new migrants are also treated as belonging to a separate category to maintain analytical consistency. The following graph shows the responses of the first two categories of settlers to the four questions.



**Fig.3.** Percentage Comparison of Self-Reported Hunger and Food Shortage.

According to the graph, about 68% of the voluntary settlers experienced hunger during the 1984 famine period. On the other hand, only 43% of the involuntary settlers recounted starving in those days. However, the percentage of self-reported hunger accounts of voluntary and involuntary settlers reversed after their resettlement. In comparison, more involuntary settlers than voluntary settlers reported having experienced hunger in Metekel between 1984 and 1998. As indicated on the right end of the graph, about 61% of the voluntary settlers reported that their 1999 production would not last until the 2000 harvest. The percentage of respondents (involuntary settlers) reporting insufficient production in 1999 was even higher (89%). This does not necessarily mean that 61% of the voluntary settlers and 89% of the forced migrants starved in that year. Some might have employed different strategies to cope with the scarcity. These figures show the relative performance and the degree of perceived vulnerability of the two categories of settlers.

The survey materials are consistent with the data obtained through the intensive interviews. Of the 10 key informants who were voluntary settlers, seven individuals reported having gotten through 1998 and the previous years without severe food shortages. They were also confident that their 1999 produce would last until the next harvest. The remaining three informants not only recounted having starved (more than once) before 1999, but also reflected their pessimism regarding the future. For one of the informants, for example, food insecurity had been a chronic problem. He

was an old man without a wife or draft animal, both of which are indispensable to rural farm life. Another informant, an old woman without a husband, had an ox, but her harvest had always been insufficient owing to labor shortage. She relied on help and hired labor, which were not dependable. Another woman, married and a mother of six, had draft animals. However, she could not produce sufficient food because she lacked male support. Her husband and her first son suffered from chronic illnesses.

On the other hand, many of the involuntary settlers who participated in the interview did not have good stories to tell. Six of the ten informants, for instance, recounted that they experienced food insecurity both in 1998 and in previous years. Five of them noted that their 1999 produce would not last until the 2000 harvest. Four of these informants explained food shortages in relation to the lack of draft animals and the consequent low per capita grain production. Some of them were single mothers who also lacked the indispensable male support in farming. Until recently, some of the involuntary settlers maintained mixed feelings regarding their choice of residence. Three informants decided to stay in Metekel only during the latter part of the 1990s. One of them, who sought a remedy for the 1980s injustice of forced removal, was still undecided and less committed to staying in Metekel. Those few forced settlers who made their choices quite earlier vigorously pursued livestock and grain production. Like the voluntary settlers, they managed to recover faster and endure the shocks of food insecurity.

Interestingly, the interview and survey materials were consistent with the census results from one of the villages, which hosted both categories of settlers. The results showed that less than 26% of the voluntary settlers reported having starved between 1991 and 1998. In comparison, more than 43% of the involuntary settlers recounted starving during that period.

### III. Self-Reported Satisfaction

Two related questions were asked to understand the gains and losses associated with the resettlement program. The first read, "by comparing your losses and gains due to the resettlement, characterize the overall." As indicated in Table 1, 78% of the forced settlers reported that they had become worse off due to the resettlement. In comparison, the assessment of about 54% of the voluntary settlers was that they were better off in the resettlement area than they had been in their homeland.

Respondents' feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction were also elicited by asking them (Table 2) to locate the socio-economic positions of their respective households, vis-a-vis others, on a five-step ladder. They were told that step one (the bottom rung) represented the worst possible scenario they could imagine, while step five (the top rung) represented the best situation in terms of leading life in rural Ethiopia. They were given ideal descriptions of the best and the worst scenarios. Each respondent was then asked to indicate the step on the ladder that best depicted his/her household's socio-economic status during the research time and prior to his or her resettlement in Metekel. The ladder approach helped to understand how settlers assessed and evaluated changes in their socio-economic condition. Important differences were observed between the responses of respondents who were volun-

**Table 1.** Self-Reported Gains and Losses Due to the Resettlement.

	Type of Settlers			
	Voluntary		Involuntary	
	Response	Percent	Response	Percent
Gained	73	53.7	12	19
Lost	46	33.8	49	77.8
Remained same	12	8.8	2	3.2
No answer	5	3.7	0	0
Total	136	100	63	100

**Table 2.** Percentage Representation of Self-Reported Socio-Economic Status.

	Voluntary Settlers		Involuntary Settlers	
	Homeland (%)	Metekel (%)	Homeland (%)	Metekel (%)
Step 5	4	1	3	0
Step 4	11	8	16	1
Step 3	33	34	44	20
Step 2	20	34	27	27
Step 1	32	23	9	51
	Pre-1984	In 1999	Pre-1984	In 1999

tary and those who recounted being forced to resettle.

Among the voluntary settlers, the number of hopeless and destitute respondents (Step 1) dropped from 32% prior to their resettlement to 23% in 1999. On the contrary, involuntary settlers who considered themselves as the poorest of the poor increased from 9% prior to 1984 to 51% in 1999. As high as 63% of the respondents who were involuntary settlers felt that, prior to the resettlement, they had belonged to the middle and/or upper socio-economic positions (Steps 3 to 5). This figure had dropped to 21% during the research time. In comparison, 48% of the voluntary settlers reported that they were in the middle and/or upper rungs when they were back home. The drop for this group was only five percent. From this analysis it appeared that the resettlement was disproportionately painful for forced relocatees.

The intensive interviews supported the results obtained through the survey. When asked to compare their lives based on material gains and/or losses due to the resettlement program, seven informants who were voluntary settlers indicated that they were better off in the resettlement area than they had been back home during the first half of the 1980s. Of the remaining three informants, two stated that their material conditions had remained the same. Many of them remembered the steady depletion of resources and their hopelessness at the height of the agonizing famine. One informant reported that in 1984 her household sold all the animals to buy food. The money did not last long. She made the painful decision to desert her husband to save herself and their three children. In 1999, this woman owned eight head of cattle and produced sufficient grain to feed her household.

Another famine survivor reported having left his homeland after exhausting his resources. He left Wollo before the resettlement program was officially announced. During the research period, this person was among the surplus-producing farmers. He owned three head of cattle. Another settler stated that his wife had tragically

passed away during the famine crisis of the 1980s, and he had had nothing to feed his children. In 1999, he owned three head of cattle, produced sufficient grain for consumption, and could afford to send his daughter to a nursing school in Gonder, a city located far away. Other voluntary settlers also stated that they were better off in Metekel for good reasons.

The involuntary settlers who participated in the interviews were asked whether they lost or gained from the resettlement program. This question was less relevant to five informants who came as newly registered farmers and/or dependents of other settlers. They could not provide comparable capacities and experiences. However, they indicated that their respective parents returned to their homeland to avoid further impoverishment and/or sickness. The remaining five informants mentioned losses. One informant claimed that in 1984 he had had three hectares of land, three head of cattle, eight sheep, and a variety of crops in the field. He compared what he had had back home with what he commanded in Metekel in 1999 (two ha of land, one goat, and insufficient food production). In 1984, another informant had had 12 goats/sheep and crops ready for harvesting in the field. This person stated that because of the resettlement he missed the opportunity to replace the head of cattle he had lost during the famine. Moreover, he complained that his household used to produce more quintals of grain in Wollo than they usually harvested in Metekel. During the research period, this settler owned an ox and five goats. Others also reported becoming more impoverished due to the resettlement.

#### IV. Per Capita Production

The agricultural performances of the 20 randomly selected key informants were examined to compare differences in the volume of food production. To this effect, the amount of grain (sorghum and finger millet) harvested for the cropping seasons of 1997 and 1998 had been assessed. A thorough examination of per capita production revealed the differences between voluntary and involuntary settlers with respect to the amount of food they produced to meet consumption requirements for their respective households. Based on local assessment, 300 kg of grain per person per year was estimated as a minimum requirement. Although food intake depends on body mass, age, health, and activity level, none of these were factored in while computing the minimum amount. The purpose was to examine the agricultural performance of individual households, represented by key informants, in terms of meeting the local estimate (300 kg of sorghum or finger millet per person per year). This estimation was consistent with the food intake assessment of individuals in the resettlement area. On average, a person consumed two and half injera (Ethiopian bread), or approximately 0.625 kg of grain, per day. Accordingly, the amount of grain a person needed for one year was estimated at 228 kg. In view of the fact that a portion of the harvest was sold to buy other foodstuffs, the 300 kg per person per year estimation appeared moderate.

The production data obtained from the 20 informants suggested that most voluntary migrants were producing relatively sufficient grain for annual consumption. In 1999, for example, eight of the 10 informants produced grain that was expected to last until the next harvest. The remaining two informants produced less than the

minimum amount they needed. Nevertheless, one of them reported having harvested two and half quintals of sesame, which was equivalent (in market value) to 8.75 quintals of sorghum/finger millet. In view of this fact, only one informant appeared to face a grain shortage in that year. In the previous year (1998), six of these ten informants reported having produced enough food, while the remaining four harvested below requirements and thus experienced food shortages.

The per capita production recounted by informants selected from among involuntary settlers suggested that a large number of them had been producing insufficient food. In 1999, five of the ten key informants harvested below the minimum estimates to support their households. In 1998, the same individuals and two more informants reported having produced less than the amount they needed for annual consumption. Many explained the low level of grain production in terms of lack of draft animals and inability to recover from the unexpected loss of Italian support. Most of them did not have savings in cash or otherwise at the time this assistance terminated.

## V. Possession of Goods

Better-reestablished settler households tended to have relatively complete and good quality farm equipment and household utensils. Possession of valuables, such as a radio and a watch also reflected the economic position of households, which in turn mirrored the level of reestablishment in the new resettlement area. With these views in mind, attempts were made to examine if the voluntary and involuntary settlers could be differentiated based on an inventory of the plough set, hand tools, household utensils, and precious assets.

There existed minor differences between the two categories of settlers in terms of their possession of hand tools, furniture, and other household utensils. In this regard, the distinction had to do with the quantity (rather than quality) of goods settlers declared owning. Many of the informants selected from voluntary settlers provided lengthy lists of items, often with multiple duplicates. In comparison, those selected from forced settlers provided shorter lists. Voluntary settlers, most of whom had decided to stay in Metekel, seemed to have spent quite some time accumulating these material goods. Some settlers acquired certain goods from returnees (people who left Metekel to return to their original home) for free and/or low prices. It appeared that undecided settlers, mostly involuntary migrants, were less attracted to abandoned and/or cheap items.

Major differences were noticed between the two groups of settlers with respect to the plough set and valuables. Nine of the ten informants selected from voluntary settlers had complete plough sets. The plough set consisted of several pieces of metal, leather, and wooden materials. Some of the materials, such as the iron tip of the plough, were bought from the market, while certain skilled local persons crafted the wooden and leather parts. Assembling the various parts required money, skill, time, and/or determination to use them. Regarding valuables, of the 10 voluntary settlers, four had both radios and watches, while one individual owned only a radio. The other five had neither radios nor watches. Among the informants selected from involuntary settlers, only six of the ten individuals had the complete plough sets,



and only three people had radios, one of them also owning a watch.

### WHY DIFFERENTIAL REESTABLISHMENT?

From interviews with key informants, it appeared that certain psychological and socio-economic factors at least partly caused the relative readjustment differences between voluntary and forced settlers. First, the presence/absence of determination to live and work in Metekel accounted for the most part. The voluntary settlers welcomed the resettlement program not only to escape the food crisis temporarily, but also to redress their vulnerability to famine through out-migration. Thus, they exhibited determination to stay in the resettlement area and launch a long-term life plan. On the contrary, the forced settlers, who were uprooted from their agreeable homes against their will, lacked the motivation to invest and stay in the environmentally harsh Metekel lowlands. Moreover, after experiencing the agonizing removal that involved the use of brute force, they seem to have developed a heightened sense of insecurity and unpredictability about life and property rights. As elaborated below, lack of determination to live in Metekel may best be explained in relation to sustained ambition to return to home as well as sustained indifference and resistance to the resettlement program at large.

Second, preoccupation with plans for return trips affected chances for faster reestablishment. Since involuntary settlers were rounded up and hastily relocated, many of them left their land, crops, animals, property, and in some cases family members unattended. Hence, such people were on constant search for ways to leave the resettlement area to regain control over what they had left behind. Prior to 1991, many settlers managed to escape through the Sudan, some disappeared en route, and others were caught by authorities and turned back to Metekel. About 60% of settlers left the area following the 1991 government change in Ethiopia. Some involuntary settlers, however, could not return for such reasons as lack of transport and lack of knowledge about the status of their resources back home. Some remained undecided about their long-term residence and commitment until mid-1990s.

Third, rejection of the resettlement program, continued feelings of resistance, and expectation of formal redress partly contributed to the delayed readjustment. Between 1986 and 1991, the settlers worked on collective farms for biweekly food ration. The migrants did not have control over the fruits of their labor. Informants recruited from among voluntary settlers reported regular participation on those farms. Moreover, many reported spending their spare time and resources growing private crops on their gardens and on the outskirts of the collective fields. Some also started raising animals (sheep, goats, and cattle) as early as 1986. Many informants from among involuntary settlers, nevertheless, admitted involvement in conspiracies designed to discourage participation on the collective farms. Since food was distributed according to family size rather than according to work done, many forced settlers reportedly expressed their grievance and resistance through silent labor sabotage, including absenteeism, lateness, and poor performance. They rarely engaged in raising private crops and animals. After 1991, some forced settlers expected the new government to transport them back to their homelands and guarantee the return of



their lands. To their disappointment, this never happened and was unlikely to come about during the research period.

This article is not intended to characterize all voluntary settlers as successful or rich, and all involuntary settlers as unsuccessful or poor. It needs to be stressed that the resettlement program had ramifications for both categories of settlers. For example, they all had migrated to undeveloped area, had experienced increased mortality during the early phase, had been affected by the clashes with the host population, and had suffered from income loss when the Italians withdrew. The main purpose of this paper is to account for the existence and causes of the relative reestablishment differences between the two categories of settlers. In the late 1990s, these differences began to narrow because most forced settlers seemed to have decided to live and work in Metekel.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined the differential readjustment experiences of voluntary and involuntary settlers in Metekel resettlement, Ethiopia. Five indicators were used to assess the differences between the two categories of settlers. In all counts, voluntary settlers appeared relatively better reestablished than forced migrants. Therefore, the hypothesis, "if voluntary and involuntary settlers were involved in one resettlement program, the voluntary settlers would have readjusted or adapted better and sooner than involuntary settlers" has been accepted as valid. The study revealed that the manner of resettlement could determine the success of reestablishment in the new environment. Also the disruptive effects of displacement could endure among forced migrants for psychological, economic, and socio-cultural reasons. Under certain circumstances, what may be considered the best compensation for losses or the best treatment of settlers may not necessarily lead to successful reestablishment. Policymakers and resettlement planners should avoid relocation projects that are likely to cause enduring disruption.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** The data used in this article came from a doctoral research sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. During the fieldwork, the Department of Sociology and Social Administration at Addis Ababa University provided logistic support. The Department of Anthropology at the University of Florida and the Christian Michelsen Institute supported my graduate study, during which much of the writing was done. The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies at Kyoto University offered a research fellowship that enabled me to refine my previous works for publication. Acknowledgements are due to these institutions for their support. I thank Dr. Art Hansen, Dr. Masayoshi Shigeta, and an anonymous reviewer of the earlier version of this article for their ideas, comments, and assistance.

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—————Accepted January 30, 2002

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